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ABSTRACT

The first of a series of 13 monthly reports, this paper reviews the issue of the year-round school -- a variety of calendar changes aimed at increasing the educational and economic efficiency of the school system. The author first reviews the major pros and cons of the year-round controversy, focusing on the questions of potential learning benefits to students and money saved on building costs in relation to money spent on additional staff and services. She then investigates the economic and social impact of year-round scheduling on the community as a whole, outlines a method to plan and initiate a year-round plan, and describes several plans already in operation. A selected bibliography is provided. (Author)

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Year-Round Schools

School leadership digest

Dee Schofield

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FOREWORD

With the *School Leadership Digest* series, the National Association of Elementary School Principals adds another project to its continuing program of publications designed to offer school leaders essential information on a wide range of critical concerns in education.

The *School Leadership Digest* is a series of monthly reports on top priority issues in education. At a time when decisions in education must be made on the basis of increasingly complex information, the *Digest* provides school administrators with concise, readable analyses of the most important trends in schools today, as well as points up the practical implications of major research findings.

By special cooperative arrangement, the series draws on the extensive research facilities and expertise of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. The titles in the series were planned and developed cooperatively by both organizations. Utilizing the resources of the ERIC network, the Clearinghouse is responsible for researching the topics and preparing the copy for publication by NAESP.

The author of this report, Dee Schofield, is employed by the Clearinghouse as a research analyst and writer.

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INTRODUCTION

> Winter and summer, then, were two hostile lives, and bred two separate natures. Winter was always the effort to live; summer was tropical license. . . . summer and country were always sensual living, while winter was always compulsory learning. Summer was the multiplicity of nature; winter was school.
>
> The bearing of the two seasons on the education of Henry Adams was no fancy; it was the most decisive force he ever knew. . . . From earliest childhood the boy was accustomed to feel that, for him, life was double. Winter and summer . . . law and liberty, were hostile, and the man who pretended they were not, was in his eyes a schoolmaster—that is, a man employed to tell lies to little boys.
>
> *The Education of Henry Adams* (1907)

Of course, American education is not the same as it was when Henry Adams attended school in the mid-19th century. The form and content of education in the United States are so drastically different that contrasts need not even be drawn. But one thing remains the same; one basic attribute of American education has never changed. The year is still divided into two segments for most American children—school and vacation.

The two-part year remains a fundamental component of the educational, social, and cultural experience of members of this society. Almost all of today's school administrators and teachers, as well as parents and taxpayers, have shared this experience. The schedules of business and industry are in part based on the school/vacation dichotomy, along with such venerable American institutions as the family vacation and Little League.

Like it or not, administrators and citizens concerned with improving the efficiency and educational quality of the nation's schools through rearranging the traditional school calendar must face the fact that this two-part year has long been, and still continues to be, an integral component of the Ameri-

can experience. As M. Gene Henderson, superintendent of schools in St. Charles, Missouri, has said, "philosophically, I don't feel that the American people will ever permit the year-round school. We are as emotional about that three-months summer vacation as we are about apple pie, motherhood and the flag."[1]

However, economic hard times and shortages have recently brought about the fall of other American traditions. If apple pie is still plentiful, T-bone steak is not. And Americans have to give up other luxuries (such as taking family drives on Sunday) because of the scarcity of gasoline.

The mood of the country seems to be shifting from one of extravagance and unnecessary consumption to one of conservation and more efficient utilization of existing resources. It is possible that one effect of this change in national attitude may be a wider acceptance of year-round school as one means of conserving limited human and economic resources. In spite of the deeply ingrained nature of the two-part year, year-round scheduling still offers one potential means of fully utilizing America's educational resources.

A Brief History

The calendar presently in use in most American schools is a holdover from an essentially agrarian society in which rural children often could attend school for only six months of the year. With the Industrial Revolution of the late 1880s, the nation's population became increasingly concentrated in urban areas, making more school days per year feasible. Most state legislatures compromised between rural and urban interests by instituting the 180-day school year with a three-month summer vacation. But the basic split between school and vacation remained the same.

The first extended school year plan was introduced in Bluffton, Indiana, in 1904. Until the 1960s, various plans increasing the number of school operating days were tried out in different parts of the country—usually without lasting success. Thomas[2] notes that, in the sixty-five years from 1904

to 1969, only one entire school system made student participation in the year-round plan mandatory, and that this plan "did save space and did save tax dollars."

Since 1969, year-round school and extended school year plans have received considerable attention from districts across the nation. Many school systems have considered initiating such plans on various levels from elementary through high school. The reasons for revival of interest in what Jensen[3] calls "that hoary old idea" are essentially the same as those that have long prompted educators to look to a rescheduled school year as a means of solving educational and financial problems. However, schools operating under year-round plans are still the exceptions: in most of America, the two-part year remains an essential part of education.

The following pages review literature dealing with the advantages and disadvantages of year-round schools. Included is a look at some of the criteria developed by authorities to help school systems determine whether year-round plans are feasible in their particular cases. Plans in operation are also surveyed, and ways in which school districts may explain year-round plans to parents, teachers, and taxpayers are reviewed.

Definition of Terms

The term year-round school refers to a number of plans, all of which share the common characteristic of making more effective use of the time students spend in school. Although most schools tailor year-round scheduling to fit their particular needs, year-round plans can be classed in two general groups: (1) trimester, quarter, and quinmester plans and (2) continuous school year plans (including multiple trails and flexible all-year plans). The plans in the first group generally do not increase attendance days above the usual 180, though extra attendance is optional under some of these plans. The second group of plans does increase the number of attendance days, though the flexible all-year plan does not mandate a required number of attendance days.

The plans in the first group are the most common and the best documented. Of these, five stand out:

- The *45-15 plan* divides students into four attendance groups. Each group attends school for 45 days, then vacations for 15 days. The groups' attendance is staggered so that only three groups are in school at any one time.
- The *staggered quarter plan* is similar to 45-15, except that the terms are 12 weeks long, and students may choose which three terms they attend school.
- The *voluntary attendance quarter plan* requires students to attend three of the four quarters, but they can choose which three and also can attend all four quarters if they wish.
- The *staggered* or *continuous trimester plans* operate essentially like quarter plans, except that the year is divided into three segments and the students into three groups, only two of which attend during any one term.
- The *quinmester plans* offer four 45-day sessions to make up the 180-day school year. Attendance during a fifth term is optional.

The plans in the second group are generally oriented toward increased flexibility of grading, instruction, and curriculum through providing calendar changes conducive to innovation. Although this paper focuses primarily on the plans in the first group, it is important to realize that year-round school encompasses these other alternatives as well.

The continuous progress plans call for an extension of the school year to 204-225 days for all students. As Gatewood explains, "Students complete one grade's work in the traditional 180 school days, and then spend the remaining time in the year on the next grade's work." Students' work is measured by learning tests to determine the grade level of achievement.

The multiple trails plan is also a continuous learning plan. Gatewood describes this plan as allowing for "more individualization and flexibility," since the "secondary grade lines become insignificant." The school day is broken up into time modules, and "pupils move along a subject trail at their own rates."

The flexible all-year plan is the least structured of any year-round plan. It allows for completely individualized, ungraded instruction, and for the student to progress at his own speed, taking vacations whenever he needs them.

The plans in the first group are better known for their economic advantages, offering savings on facility construction and operation and allowing for more efficient utilization of facilities. Those in the second group are generally oriented to improvement of educational quality. The multiple trails plan and the flexible all-year plan encourage improvement of education through radical restructuring of calendar, curriculum, and instructional methods.

THE QUESTION OF ECONOMICS: IS MONEY SAVED?

One of the primary reasons (and in some cases, *the* primary reason) prompting educators to investigate year-round school plans centers around plain economic necessity. It costs increasingly more to build and operate schools. In many districts, enrollment is growing at a far greater rate than the ability to provide facilities, and the community's tax base cannot handle such increases. Also, in many areas, taxpayers seem reluctant to support schools financially.

It is revealing that many of the articles surveyed in this paper emphasize the economic advantages and disadvantages of year-round school before they deal with the educational aspects of such plans. This emphasis would seem to indicate that educators are, of necessity, somewhat preoccupied with school finances, even though they may regard such preoccupation regrettable.

Construction Costs

The Proponents

Fewer buildings will be needed. Saving on the cost of building new schools is often cited as one of the major advantages of year-round schooling. Proponents of year-round education argue that such plans enable a district to make fuller use of existing facilities, in some cases eliminating the need for new ones and in others slowing the rate at which new building is required. Thus, building costs, as well as projected construction costs, are reduced.

For example, Thomas states that "the increase in existing school plant capacity by the equivalent of 60 classrooms may be worth a potential $4 to $6 million. Additional savings will accrue to the taxpayer when the school board builds an 800 pupil school which can house, with cycling, a potential 1,000 to 1,100 students."

A 1972 publication by Education Turnkey Systems argues that under the 45-15 calendar, "only three-fourths of the building space which would be necessary to house the entire population under a traditional calendar is necessary to house the same number of students. . . ." This publication also notes that all districts (regardless of their growth rates) can potentially benefit from year-round plans such as 45-15. When only three schools instead of four are necessary for the same number of students, the periods of time over which savings are realized may differ, but the savings themselves can still benefit all districts.

In some areas, the tax base will not support badly needed increases in facilities. In districts with large growth rates (usually associated with young families who have more children in school), the taxpaying population may not be able to keep pace with the rapidly growing student population. Therefore, the school system must utilize its existing facilities to the fullest extent. It is particularly in these districts that year-round scheduling may be the most feasible means of providing additional space—space that cannot be constructed under tax law restrictions.

Community relations may improve. Year-round use of existing facilities may also help to improve the relationship between the schools and the taxpayers, according to some proponents of year-round education. Some of the public's confidence in the economic operation of the schools might be restored if the schools could assure better use of tax dollars through increased use of buildings.

Education Turnkey Systems points out that normally a school building is in use only one quarter of a day (six hours) for only half a year (180 days). Taxpayers are paying for construction of buildings that are normally used only about one-eighth of the year. As the study states, "The American public should be concerned that the bond money they are asked to authorize purchases facilities that sit idle for about 88% of their useful lifetime." Jensen notes that year-round plans "make use of all or part of the classroom space now wasted through our stubborn adherence to the farm-oriented calendar

which uses our educational machine only about two-thirds of the time."

Maintenance costs should not increase. Supporters of year-round scheduling say that any increase in operation expenses (also paid for by tax money) will be offset by the financial gains from utilizing available facilities more efficiently. The tax money saved on construction would be more than adequate to cover any additional expenses necessary for maintenance and for remodeling existing buildings (the installation of air conditioning, for example).

Thomas points out that most businesses operate on a year-round basis and still manage to perform maintenance and renovation work, usually without unreasonable costs and with little inconvenience to their employees. A major increase in maintenance expenses when a school changes to year-round operation probably indicates that "existing maintenance practices have been inefficient or poorly structured."

According to its proponents, year-round scheduling offers the most feasible means of utilizing existing space as well as reducing the need for new space. They believe that in the long run, the taxpayer is a major beneficiary of year-round building utilization.

The Opposition

Hidden costs will offset savings. Opponents of year-round scheduling believe that the widely touted savings on construction costs are not necessarily as inevitable as supporters would like to think. While a certain amount of money is saved by building fewer facilities, other costs can cancel any financial advantage gained by less construction.

Some opponents believe that as far as the operating budget is concerned, costs may actually increase under year-round scheduling. As Ernst states, "The basic argument—that the year-round school will save money on bricks and mortar—is misleading. The original cost of a new building, amortized over a period of time, really comprises a very insignificant amount of the total cost of education, *per year.*" He also believes that in districts with rapidly growing enrollment, new

school buildings must eventually be built anyway, and "the costs of labor and materials may be a good deal higher five years from now."

McLain[4] concedes that under year-round scheduling some construction may be avoided, but he also notes that most districts that have "carefully analyzed costs" have found "little, if any, savings in the operating budget." A 1971 article in *Updating School Board Policies*, "Year-Round Schools . . ." notes that year-round school "may actually raise the cost of education within a district, though it would shift the burden from capital to current funds."

Remodeling may be necessary. Although some money may be saved on construction of new facilities, the cost of renovating old ones to meet the demands of full-time use must also be taken into account. Many of the articles surveyed in this paper note that air conditioning is necessary to make school buildings livable during the summer months, particularly in the southern and western parts of the country. The *Updating School Board Policies* article indicates that rescheduling often entails a change from traditional teaching methods to team teaching and other innovative teaching modes. Some districts have found it necessary to remodel their schools to accommodate such changes. Both of these factors necessitate the expenditure of additional funds and help to deplete the savings originally gained from decreasing construction of new buildings.

Maintenance costs may increase. The problem of year-round maintenance of school buildings is another objection often raised by opponents of year-round school. They point out that since buildings are in constant use, summer maintenance work is not feasible. Although maintenance costs are dependent on local conditions, an increase in this budgetary item is a real possibility. Under a year-round schedule, as Ernst points out, nighttime maintenance work may be necessary, and this can cost a district more money.

Energy consumption may increase. Year-round scheduling can lead to increased energy consumption—an increase that may become progressively more difficult to meet in these days

of energy shortage. The installation of air conditioning, for example, means an increase in the amount of energy (electrical or otherwise) required to operate such equipment. Additional energy for lighting would of course be necessary under a year-round calendar. In districts dependent on busing to transport their students, year-round school may mean that more gasoline will be needed. And in those districts already having difficulty getting enough fuel to keep their buses running during the regular nine-month school year, an increase in busing is not likely to meet with approval.

Staffing Costs

The Proponents

The experts disagree whether year-round scheduling actually reduces school systems' personnel costs. Proponents of year-round school generally believe that the cost of additional supporting staff and teachers that may be necessary in some schools will be cancelled out by the savings from reduced construction.

Jensen and Bauman[5] believe that actual reductions in staff may be possible under year-round scheduling. Jensen states, "Depending on the number of teachers electing to teach year-round, not as many full-time, full-fledged professional teachers will be required to staff any system."

Thomas believes that "reductions in enrollments can be paralleled with reductions in staff, i.e., teachers, principals, clerks, janitors, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc." Such reductions result in a corresponding reduction in expenditures for salaries under some year-round plans, even though some employees must be paid for more months of work. According to Thomas, "Field studies have repeatedly shown that dollar savings in instructional and other salaries are a possibility with certain recommended extended year plans."

In a 1970 article, Thomas[6] is quoted as saying that savings in salaries are contingent on class size and teaching methods. If a school lowers the student-teacher ratio, thereby diminishing class size, then savings will be correspondingly reduced.

Also, Thomas states that "you won't save if you insist on one teacher, one class. You have to knock out tracking, grading. Group students where you find them and combine teachers into teams." If these steps are taken, substantial savings in personnel expenses can be realized, according to proponents of year-round scheduling.

Jensen believes that, in addition to staff salary savings, year-round scheduling can bring about a lowering of teacher retirement costs, "thus diminishing demand for taxes to support such plans." Teacher retirement plans are intended to provide full-time retirement benefits for teachers who have actually been working only eight months of each year. Jensen states that "this is a costly process both to the teacher and to the community underwriting such plans." Under year-round scheduling, those teachers electing to work a full twelve months per year would receive maximum retirement benefits, whereas those working fewer months per year would receive lower benefits in accordance with the amount of time they have worked. The result would be, according to Jensen, a sizeable reduction in retirement plan costs.

The Opposition

Opponents believe that substantial increases in personnel expenses can result from year-round scheduling. Larry Sibelman, vice president of the United Teachers, voices this most commonly raised objection to year-round staffing of schools:

> Personnel costs represent the largest cost item in the operating costs of most school systems. If the school year was expanded and teacher compensation was increased in proportion to the expansion of the length of the school year, and if other personnel costs were likewise expanded the results would be a substantial increase in annual cost. The only way such programs could result in financial benefits to school districts would be to have teachers and other personnel work longer for the same compensation. That is unthinkable!

Sibelman also states that year-round programs designed primarily to save money and not to improve the quality of education will most likely be opposed by teachers, though

teachers will usually support programs that are "aimed at extending education."

In recognizing the importance of gaining teachers' support for year-round scheduling, Thomas counsels against "deliberately antagonizing teachers." He states that "the extended school year can die aborning when legislators or school boards deliberately set the stage for cost savings at the expense of teachers." However, he also points out that in some cases, teachers and administrators have sought unwarranted increases in pay and "have been ready to change the ground rules to obtain special advantages at the expense of the program. Frequently, projected cost studies of extended school year programs show padded staffs."

Increases in salary expenses may also result if the teachers within a school cannot evenly schedule their working time under a year-round plan. The *Updating School Board Policies* article states that "unless all the teachers are willing and able to stagger their time off, a district will need more teachers and may have to go to a form of differentiated staffing." Such a course would inevitably lead to increases in personnel expenditures.

Economic Impact on Community

Although relatively few of the articles surveyed in this paper deal directly with the economic impact of year-round school on the community as a whole, this aspect of year-round operation is obviously relevant to districts considering such a change.

Jensen argues that year-round scheduling can assist businessmen in the community by "eliminating the present 'stop-and-go' imbalances on services demanded by a public tied to the 9-month calendar."[7] He predicts that year-round scheduling of the schools can be an advantage to clothing manufacturing and sales, real estate sales, moving and storage companies, and telephone and other utilities.

Business would, according to Jensen, also benefit from the "constant supply of junior grade employees" available for

employment throughout the year, not just in the summer. Student labor could solve the personnel problems of many businesses and agricultural operations that need extra help during periods other than summer.

On the other hand, the *Updating School Board Policies* article disagrees with Jensen, stating that "merchants and businessmen certainly do not want hordes of high school students wandering through the business districts every day of the year." Instead of viewing year-round scheduling of the schools as advantageous to business and to the community as a whole, this article argues that such scheduling may actually mean an increased financial burden on taxpayers. School facilities such as playgrounds would not be available to out-of-school children, since the schools would be in use all year. And recreation programs that depend on school personnel for supervision may be hard pressed to find substitute leaders. The responsibility for providing recreation facilities and programs for children out of school could be shifted from the schools to the community as a whole, but the taxpayers would still have to foot the bill.

THE QUESTION OF QUALITY: IS EDUCATION IMPROVED?

Unlike the unresolved economic controversy surrounding year-round school, agreement is general that such programs can improve educational quality if the schools are willing to be innovative in their approaches to curriculum and instruction. The *Updating School Board Policies* article, "Year-Round Schools: A Money-Saving Idea Is Loaded with Hidden Costs," critical of year-round scheduling from an economic viewpoint, grants that the educational aspects of such plans can benefit the schools. It states that "educationally there seems to be much to recommend it; financially the savings are minimal at best."

Effect of Shorter Vacation Periods

Year-round school eliminates the three-month forgetting period that students experience while they are out of school in the summer, according to Adams and Holt. Year-round scheduling also provides more frequent breaks for students and teachers, depending on the type of plan in operation. Although these periods are much shorter than the traditional three-month vacation, some proponents of year-round school believe that both teachers and students can benefit from having vacation periods at times of the year other than the summer. As Thomas[8] states,

> All children need a change of pace several times during the year. The new school calendars can give them time to relax and get away from school pressures that make some pupils nervous wrecks and rebellious members of society. Hopefully they will have time to explore the world about them during other than the summer season.

Sibelman believes that the shorter vacation periods are a disadvantage to students and teachers, even though under some year-round plans the same amount of time off is granted as

under a regular nine-month calendar. Although he also emphasizes the importance of "respite, recreation, and renewal," he points out that shorter vacation periods can confine those teachers who wish to pursue college work and currently do so during summer months. This problem can be alleviated only if "some regular system of abbreviated sabbatical leaves or educational leaves was provided."

Some proponents of year-round school believe that the shorter periods of study (such as those under the 45-15 plan) help to reduce student and teacher boredom. As Jensen notes, the teacher's as well as the student's interest in subject matter is highest at the beginning and at the end of the teaching period. Shorter terms will reduce "classroom boredom and consequent disruption."

Potential Benefit for Disadvantaged and Gifted

Another argument in favor of year-round scheduling concerns student failure and repeating of courses. According to the proponents, shorter terms significantly reduce the rate of failure among disadvantaged students. Not only is it easier for these students to maintain interest in the subject matter, but if they do fail a course and have to repeat it, less time is spent in doing so.

Jensen states that "the cost to the system of repeating a failed subject would be less, and the adverse psychological impact on the student would be ameliorated to a degree." Brooksby believes that besides making it easier on students who must repeat subjects, year-round school can actually help to prevent student failure.

Adams lists as one of the advantages of year-round school its potential to "help the disadvantaged catch up" as well as "to reduce (or delay) dropouts." And Thomas[9] sees "potential reduction in the rate of student failure" in terms of "savings in human resources"—not just of students, but of teachers, parents, and taxpayers as well. As he states, "more disadvantaged children have a chance to reach higher rungs on the educational ladder before they leave school permanently."

Year-round scheduling can also benefit those students with

above average learning abilities. As Adams points out, "educators generally concede that pupils at the top and bottom of the spectrum—the gifted and the disadvantaged—will profit most" from year-round school. Year-round school can provide gifted students with opportunities to accelerate their studies and can offer courses for enrichment not normally available under a traditional calendar, though such opportunities depend on how the curriculum is organized.

According to Thomas,[10] "Non-disadvantaged children can be given additional instructional time to help them cope with the knowledge explosion, the need to engage in time-consuming, creating learning activities, and the need to acquire work experience or job training."

For nondisadvantaged students, year-round school can mean a younger school-leaving age, especially for gifted pupils. Brooksby regards this possibility as an advantage to the student who wishes to begin higher education at an earlier age. She also sees a younger graduation age as potentially beneficial to society through "lessening a student's dependence by freeing him for employment earlier." On the other side, Sibelman states that the value of a younger school-leaving age is "questionable, especially in urban society where job opportunities for young people are limited."

Research Inconclusive

Research measuring the educational benefits and disadvantages of year-round school is not complete. Adams notes that "as yet, there are no definitive studies to show that better education can result from [the extended school year]." Studies of the year-round experiment in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania (1928-38), according to Adams, "did not show any substantial gain—or loss—in learning achievement during the year-round operation." However, this year-round program was designed primarily to save money, not to revise curriculum or methods of instruction.

Adams also reports on studies of the Syosset, New York, year-round program, which indicate that "as a group, those in

the Syosset extended-year program made some academic gains over the control groups in the regular student body." She quotes Edward J. Murphy, superintendent of schools in Syosset, as saying that "a plan has to be in operation for six or seven years, at least at the elementary level, until you gain one complete level, to test whether it works." And most current year-round programs have not been in practice that long. The verdict on the educational validity of year-round school is not yet in.

Final Answer up to Schools

Both critics and proponents agree on one point: Any potential educational benefits that year-round scheduling may make possible are contingent on the desire of those directing and teaching under such programs to change the educational status quo. The introduction of year-round school does not mean that educational quality will be automatically raised. As Gatewood points out, year-round scheduling provides the opportunity for innovation, but it does not guarantee that education will be improved.

> There is virtually no solid research evidence to support the claim that curriculum is that much better or that pupil achievement will improve when a school employs a year-round concept. Lasting and meaningful improvement occurs only when teachers change. A year-round school provides the environment to encourage such change.

Concurring with Gatewood, Ernst points out that although proponents of year-round school are "united in their belief that an extended year will provide better educational opportunities," in actuality the achievement of these goals "depends on how [the year-round plan] is implemented."

Year-round school may act as a catalyst to much-needed change in areas such as curriculum. As Jensen states, "Most year-round plans invite, and some demand, a complete or at least substantial restructuring of the present curriculum to make it more flexible, effective and truly relevant to our rapidly changing society." Such programs can also lead to a more efficient utilization of teaching resources: "This reevalua-

tion of the total school program . . . will result in more effective use of our established capacity to teach."

Holt believes that its potential to force the educational system into badly needed change is the strongest virtue of year-round scheduling. According to Holt, year-round plans, such as 45-15, can introduce "system shock"—"the intrusion of an influence so pervasive that some sort of reaction is absolutely required." Educational philosophy and its practical manifestations in curriculum and instruction will have to be reevaluated and revised under year-round scheduling. Such system shock and accompanying reevaluation "may well be the most significant aspect of the new proposals for year-round operation."

Even though many schools may be forced to turn to year-round scheduling as a means of saving money, regardless of the educational impact such changes may entail, Holt believes that "there remains the possibility that sound educational values will be the somewhat unexpected bonus."

Citing a 1971 *Spotlight* article, Holt argues that the thinking reflected in this article proves that system shock is badly needed in the field of education. The *Spotlight* article notes that many year-round plans necessitate a radical restructuring of curriculum and labels this restructuring process a disadvantage. In taking issue with this label, Holt states that "a profession capable of producing such a statement has condemned itself, or at least has developed a mind-set that needs to be shocked."

TAKING THE LEAP: INITIATING A YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM

> The year-round school is perhaps the most complex and far-reaching program you can attempt. No other change affects so many people. To implement a year-round program without first fully exploring its many curricular, instructional, financial, and management implications is to create a monster. The responsibility for averting such a disaster falls directly on the shoulders of the superintendent.
>
> *Gatewood*

A school system should not initiate year-round education without an extremely careful investigation of its economic and educational effects. Constant evaluation of the year-round plan is necessary before, during, and after its implementation, according to Alkin.

Alkin offers a comprehensive definition of evaluation "as the process of determining the kinds of decisions that have to be made, selecting, collecting, and analyzing information needed in making these decisions, and reporting summary information to the decision-maker." He classifies decision areas related to year-round program implementation into an evaluation model with five stages: needs assessment, program planning, implementation evaluation, progress evaluation, and outcome evaluation.

Assessing the Need

The first step on the road to year-round school is an imperative one: the definition of both problems within the school district and their alternative solutions, one of which may be year-round scheduling. The first of Alkin's five stages (needs assessment) fits in here. The school superintendent must "assess the needs of students, the community, and of society in relation to the current status or accomplishments of the system."

If a school district's problems are caused by lack of suffi-

cient funds and inadequate space, resulting in a downgrading of educational quality, then year-round scheduling may be considered a possible solution to these problems. Gatewood notes that districts that have had "to resort to shortened or half-day sessions, split or double sessions, rental of buildings in the community, sharing of facilities by other schools . . . [and] use of portable classrooms" are in an excellent position to regard year-round school as a possible alternative.

Thomas points out that it is absolutely essential for state legislation to allow for year-round school. The district should carefully check state regulations governing length of school year, state aid, teacher pay, entrance age requirements, and mandatory attendance before proceeding too far with plans for year-round education.

Gatewood notes that at least three states have passed legislation permitting year-round scheduling, and "twenty-two other states offer some flexibility that could lead toward acceptance of year-round programs." Thomas outlines the essential changes in state law necessary for rescheduling or extension of the school year. If state law does not provide for these changes in school operation, the path to year-round school may well have to start in the state legislature.

Gatewood recommends that "initial exploration" into year-round scheduling be conducted informally before the district commits itself to a formal feasibility study. An ad hoc group of administrators, teachers, school board members, and members of the community can conduct the initial study. This group, according to Gatewood, should concern itself with answering the following questions:

- Is there a need to change the length of the school year to make the school more economically efficient, or to provide higher quality education?
- What will it cost in human and monetary resources to explore the feasibility of a year-round plan and sell it to the public?
- What type of year-round plan, of the many varieties available, might be implemented in this school district?
- Where will we get the additional revenues to start the plan?

If this ad hoc group recommends further investigation, the district can initiate a feasibility study. Gatewood suggests that the committee organized to conduct this study consist of representative parents, administrators, teachers, students, and members of the community. Its subcommittees should deal with the economic aspects of year-round school (including "capital outlay, operations and budget, and business implications"), as well as its educational aspects (including types of programs available and necessary curricular, instructional, and personnel changes). The feasibility study should also explore means of distributing information to the public.

Planning the Program

The second stage of Alkin's evaluation model (program planning) also includes assessment of the economic and educational aspects of various year-round plans under consideration. According to Alkin, it is during this stage that the evaluator "is generally asked to provide information on the possible future impact of the introduction of several alternative programs. During the program planning phase, also, the evaluator will provide advice regarding evaluation requirements for alternative plans."

Program planning entails the selection of programs that will most fully meet needs while not exceeding the amount of resources available. In these respects, this stage seems compatible with Gatewood's emphasis on ascertaining both the kinds of plans available and which one of these would best serve the district—two purposes of the feasibility study.

To determine the economic impact of the program or programs under consideration, the committee can select a cost analysis model or analytical tool, such as Furno's Cost of Education Index or the COST-ED Model developed by Education Turnkey Systems. The CEI (Cost of Education Index) allows for the comparison of alternatives and computes costs in terms of per pupil expenditure. For example, according to Geisinger and Coleman, this index was applied to the Annville-Cleona School District (Pennsylvania) to "compare the cost of two

alternatives: (1) initiation of a K-5, 45-15 year-round school, or (2) construction of an elementary building." In this feasibility study, it was determined by the CEI that under 45-15, the district would save about $89 per pupil of the total operating costs over 18 of 20 years. For the first two years the year-round plan was in operation, the district would save $51 per pupil over the cost of a new elementary school.

The COST-ED Model, according to Educational Turnkey Systems, utilizes "the concept of resource consumption" instead of the traditional budget categories to express projected costs and savings. This concept "allows all types of resources to be considered in a similar manner rather than having teachers' salaries in some operating fund and the costs of school buildings in some construction fund."

The model also allows for the graphic display of all cost effects, those relating to facilities as well as those relating to operating costs and saving. Similar in nature to a planning, programming, and budgeting system, the COST-ED Model displays the interaction between operating and capital funds.

The Prince William County (Virginia) Public Schools utilized this model in a study to determine the feasibility of extending 45-15 operation to the entire district. This study determined that savings from a pilot program were significant and recommended that the 45-15 plan be expanded.

Bauman[11] points out that when the financial implications of a year-round program are considered, the "time dimension" of changes in budget items must be taken into account. He outlines three kinds of cost effects that are part of financing a year-round plan: *pre-implementation costs* (of planning and preparing for the program), *transitional costs* (during the period of adjustment to the new program), and *long-run costs* (after the adjustment period). These three kinds of costs should be considered in the studying and planning phases.

Gatewood suggests that in addition to the feasibility study committee, the district should appoint "a full-time, year-round school coordinator" to act as a liaison between the committee and the school, community, and other school systems. This coordinator would also be charged with formal

presentation of the committee's recommendations and conclusions. Gatewood states that these conclusions and recommendations should be the basis for the school board's formal decision, and such decisions should not be made before the feasibility study is completed.

The results of the feasibility study may not be a clear-cut recommendation of one specific kind of year-round program. For example, the feasibility study conducted for the Jefferson County, Colorado, school system concluded that none of the plans in practice elsewhere in the nation could be readily adapted to this district's particular needs. According to White, "It was concluded that the ultimate answer for year-round operation has not yet been found, and that there is probably no one plan that will be adopted nationwide. Plans should be developed within each district according to local needs and community characteristics." Consequently, the plan finally adopted by Jefferson County was tailor-made to suit the needs of that particular district.

If the decision is to initiate a year-round plan, the committee and the coordinator should be retained, according to Gatewood. A "central administrative steering committee to deal with the nitty-gritty, day-to-day curricular, instructional, financial, and business details" should then be appointed. Gatewood suggests that this steering committee develop a calendar for two or three years, a building utilization schedule, a curricular schedule "based upon student demand," and "checklists of necessary organizational and administrative work to be completed before the plan can be implemented."

Subcommittees of the central steering committee should further investigate financial implications, review present curriculum and outline potential changes, "identify internal personnel complications and methods of resolving them," and develop measures of staff and community response to year-round school.

The steering committee should also be concerned with evaluation of the plan, since "evaluation of the year-round program is crucial for its continuing improvement," according to Gatewood. The role of evaluation after initiation of the

plan is also emphasized by Alkin in the last three stages of his model (implementation evaluation, progress evaluation, and outcome evaluation).

The processes of careful investigation and implementation of year-round school outlined by Alkin and Gatewood emphasize the serious, far-reaching nature of this undertaking. A school district cannot afford to move with haste when contemplating such a radical change. To do so is, as Gatewood points out, to court disaster.

SELLING THE PROGRAM: INFORMING AND PERSUADING THE PUBLIC

> A new school calendar cannot be adopted in secrecy. You must sell the year-round idea to community, staff, and students. Failure to do so has killed more year-round programs than any other single factor.
>
> *Gatewood*

These three groups (community members, staff, and students) must be consulted during investigation, planning, and implementation of a year-round plan if the program is to succeed. Such consultation calls for the utmost skill in public relations and information dissemination. As noted in the introduction to this paper, the public can be expected to resist to some degree the kind of radical change necessitated by year-round scheduling. As Bienenstok points out, "Since the educational establishment has many functional ties with the social fabric of the broader community, a new educational pattern is likely to cause repercussions outside the school."

Several studies point up the initial resistance to year-round school—resistance that can, according to Gatewood, be overcome once it is identified. Gatewood cites a survey of teacher attitudes by *The Instructor* in which the teachers not involved in year-round school were "more reserved" in their acceptance of year-round education, whereas, "most teachers in year-round systems like it over the conventional year plan."

Participation in a year-round program seems to be a strong force in eliciting favorable response. Similar results were gathered in a Pajaro Valley Unified School District (California) poll, reported by Baker and Johnson. Only 40 percent of the district's teachers favored year-round scheduling before the program was initiated, as opposed to 80 percent who approved of the program after it went into practice. The attitudes of parents and members of the community have changed in a

similar manner in other districts, as well as in Pajaro Valley, after year-round education was under way.

But even though a district can perhaps look forward to increased support after its year-round program begins (assuming the program fulfills the expectations of those involved), the initial problem is to sell year-round education to the public before the program can even go into effect.

Community Involvement

Gatewood emphasizes the importance of involving members of the community in the investigation and planning process, and the absolute necessity of determining the community's "attitudes, concerns, and questions" about year-round school. In his leadership folio, he includes sample attitude surveys for community members in general and for those involved in business and industry in particular. The data from these surveys can be used to compile a list of "the interests, problems, and questions most frequently expressed" by those not directly associated with the schools. According to Gatewood, "This list should serve as the primary focus for a major information campaign to educate and inform the public about year-round schools *before* asking for their support of any single plan for your schools. *This is important.*"

In carrying out the campaign, Gatewood suggests that the language used in information materials should be simple, and the members of the community should be encouraged to think that year-round school is their own idea. The latter goal can be accomplished, according to Gatewood, by presenting to the voters the generally undesirable alternatives to year-round school: "a) a costly building program . . .; b) double sessions; c) grossly overcrowded classrooms."

Bienenstok also emphasizes the importance of the manner in which the year-round plan is presented to the community. He cites one example of a year-round program that failed to secure approval because the parents disliked the way in which the plan was presented to them. The parents in this New York district believed that economic necessity was not an adequate

justification for year-round school. As Bienenstok states, "The attempt to justify the innovation on the basis of its financial advantages to the local school district was found particularly objectionable. Many parents considered the stress on economy inappropriate and indefensible."

Gatewood's public relations plan for selling the year-round program to the community includes "face-to-face meetings between concerned citizens and school system personnel," a pool of speakers and discussion group leaders (including parents), multimedia programs (including filmstrips and videotapes), and full utilization of newspapers, radio, and television. The extensive nature of this campaign points up the necessity of winning community support for year-round school. As Gatewood states, "In carrying your information campaign to the public pull out all the stops. This could be the most important public relations effort your school will ever conduct."

Commitment of Staff and Students

In addition to selling the year-round program to the public, the district must also sell it to those responsible for carrying it out—the teachers and administrators. As Gatewood points out, these two groups "will bear ultimate responsibility" for the success or failure of the plan. Both groups must be well represented on planning committees and must be kept fully informed of the progress of the plan.

Failure to inform teachers and administrators can lead to disastrous results. Gatewood states that "some school districts have carried out sparkling planning and public relations efforts, only to discover too late that implementations fall apart because teachers and administrators do not understand or support the new approaches."

Teachers need information about contracts and possible salary changes under year-round scheduling. Sibelman says the district must work out "some regular system of abbreviated sabbatical leaves or educational leaves" for teachers if they are to be expected to support the year-round program.

And the district must also solicit and follow the suggestions of teachers and administrators, according to Gatewood, not only to win their support, but to benefit from their experience as well.

Finally, the students must be considered a part of the planning process since they are among the ones most directly affected by year-round school. Gatewood cites two student opinion polls in which students disapproved of year-round scheduling. The major objection cited was elimination of the summer vacation. Because of the negative attitude reflected in these two polls, districts should be careful to inform and involve their students in year-round school before it goes into effect. Gatewood states that the student should be considered "just as vital to the success of the year-round program as anyone else."

OPERATIONAL PLANS: WHERE THEY ARE AND HOW THEY ARE DOING

The majority of the literature surveyed in this paper focuses mainly on two districts that have changed to year-round scheduling, one primarily for economic reasons and the other primarily for educational reasons. The year-round plans of the Valley View School District in Romeoville, Illinois, and the Atlanta (Fulton County, Georgia) school system are the best known of any current year-round programs.

These programs are noteworthy because these two districts are among the few that have converted to year-round school on a districtwide basis. Other school systems across the country have changed to year-round operation on an experimental basis in only a few schools. Educators are observing the results of the Valley View and Atlanta programs with obvious interest, since the success or failure of these programs may in part influence the future of year-round education across the country.

Valley View and 45-15

In many respects, Valley View is typical of districts that have faced tremendous population growth in a relatively short time and have consequently found their existing facilities and tax base inadequate to meet the needs of increased enrollments. Valley View's program is the prototype of the 45-15 plan—the program developed for this Illinois district in response to these pressing problems. The 45-15 plan is the best documented plan of the many varieties of year-round school, mainly because it presents a means of coping with too many students and not enough money, and because it seems to be working in Valley View.

The majority of the Romeoville community supported the conversion to year-round school. The other means of accommodating an increased number of students—including double

sessions or bigger classes—were not desirable, according to Kenneth Hermansen, then superintendent of Valley View schools.[12] Another reason for parental support of the 45-15 plan was that it allows all students some time off during the summer, as well as vacations at other times of the year.

By converting to 45-15, the district has saved on the construction and operating costs for 60 additional classrooms, according to Ernst. An estimated $6 million have been saved under year-round operation. However, Ernst notes that this $6 million "would have been a capital expense amortized over a long period, and the real question is, did the district save any money on an annual basis?" He points out that teacher salaries are up because teachers work longer, and the district must pay them on a per diem basis since not all teachers work the same number of days per year. According to Ernst, administrative costs have also increased with more paper work, and the supportive staff must also be paid on a year-round basis.

But regardless of these possible financial negatives, the fact remains that Valley View is now accommodating approximately 1,500 more students than it could before the plan went into effect in 1970. As James Gove, superintendent of the district, points out, the savings on construction and operation will continue to be realized under year-round scheduling. He states that "as we stay on the extended year, even after we get to the point where we have to build, it means getting the equivalent of four schools for every three constructed."[13] These savings are long-term, not just immediate.

The district was careful to place the students in the four attendance groups according to geographic location. Schedules were developed to achieve proper balance in classes and in attendance groups.

However, some operational problems have arisen from the new calendar. It was discovered, for instance, that the relatively brief school sessions meant that the students could have different teachers every time they returned from a 15-day vacation period. To make sure that elementary students would have contact with at least one teacher through most of

the year, teachers organized into cooperatives—teams "assuming responsibility for 120 pupils but with only 90 in attendance at one time," reports Gatewood.

Valley View did not drastically revise its curriculum under the 45-15 plan, though the plan does offer opportunity for more individualized instruction. According to Gove, "The 45 class days [are] so much like the previous grade reporting period that little curriculum revision has been necessary."[14] But the Valley View district's main goal was not to improve educational quality. The primary concern was with the financial savings possible with year-round school.

Atlanta and Curriculum Revision

Unlike Valley View, the primary motivation behind Atlanta's year-round plan was a desire to improve the quality of education for that city's high school students. This change was to be brought about through radical restructuring of the secondary school curriculum and the addition of enrichment courses.

In pointing out the need for curriculum revision, Letson, then Atlanta's superintendent of schools and now advisor on year-round education, states that "there was a need for the curriculum to be examined and redesigned to provide each pupil educational opportunities which would be challenging but appropriately adjusted so that he could experience success without becoming either bored or discouraged."

The district decided to adopt a staggered quarter plan under which attendance during the summer session would be voluntary. This calendar allows students to seek temporary employment at times of the year other than summer, and it benefits the teaching staff by allowing more flexibility for in-service training, college study, and vacation. Teachers are paid on a per diem basis for working during the summer session.

Implementation of the Atlanta plan was accomplished in one year—1968. Twenty-five high schools converted to year-round operation in that year. Currently, 23 high schools are operating under the year-round program (two schools have been converted to middle schools). According to John Bates

of the financial office of the Fulton County schools, more time for implementation of the plan would have benefited the school system. In a telephone interview with the writer of this paper,[15] he stated that "we converted much too fast. A more gradual conversion would have helped." Bates also said that implementation of the plan might have been facilitated by first converting a small number of schools (e.g., five) to year-round operation before the whole system changed.

Even though some difficulties may have arisen from the rapid change to year-round education, the results have been generally favorable. Atlanta has had no problem getting high school students or teachers to participate in the summer session. The success of this voluntary program would seem to make it an exception to Thomas's general rule that voluntary year-round programs do not work. Even the new busing plan for Atlanta schools has not disrupted year-round operation, according to Bates. And although no formal evaluation of the plan has yet been conducted, according to John W. Haldeman,[16] administrative assistant to the superintendent, response from the public has, as a whole, been favorable.

The program has cost Atlanta taxpayers slightly more than originally projected, Bates said, mainly because of teacher salary increases. The major reason for these increases is the per diem salary schedule for teachers during the summer session. But in spite of the greater expenditure, Bates stated that "I haven't had any real objections to the program from the public."

Atlanta plans to continue the year-round plan with no changes in calendar or format, stated Haldeman. The only alterations in the program are curricular and instructional, according to Bates.

When asked if he would recommend the Atlanta plan to other districts with similar population, urban environment, and desire to improve educational quality, Haldeman stated that "each district is a separate situation. I wouldn't necessarily recommend this plan to other districts." He pointed out that each district has its own particular set of problems and must develop a plan that will best meet its special needs.

Other Districts Involved in Year-Round Plans

The following list includes schools and districts that have considered year-round operation, are presently investigating the feasibility of such a course, or have already initiated their own year-round plans. Although this list is not inclusive, it does indicate that across the country schools are increasingly regarding year-round scheduling as a viable alternative to the traditional school calendar.

Jefferson County School System (Louisville, Kentucky)

Venn W. Furgeson Elementary School (ABC Unified School District, Los Angeles, California)

San Diego, California, School System (45-15 plan in six elementary schools)

Dade County, Florida, School System

Park Elementary School (Hayward, California)

Ann Arbor, Michigan, School System

Chicago, Illinois, School System (45-15 plan in three elementary schools)

Freeland, Michigan, School System

Fort Worth Schools (Texas)

Manassas (Prince William County), Virginia

San Jacinto High School (Houston, Texas)

St. Charles, Missouri (45-15 plan)

Jefferson County Public Schools (Lakewood, Colorado)

Chula Vista City School District (Chula Vista, California)

Pajaro Valley Unified School District (Pajaro Valley, California)

Roosevelt School District (Phoenix, Arizona, 45-15)

CONCLUSION

Year-round education is a topic replete with unanswered questions, unresolved issues, and, consequently, with controversy. This paper is a modest attempt to review some of the more frequently raised questions and issues, as well as some of the suggested solutions to those problems. However, it must again be emphasized that no simple answers exist when the year-round school is at issue.

Using the Delphi Technique, a group of school administrators at a seminar sponsored by the American Association of School Administrators' National Academy for School Executives has predicted that by 1985, 50 percent of all public schools will operate on a year-round basis.[17] If this prediction is valid, the next decade must bring about truly radical alterations in American education. But it is necessary to note that administrators on the whole have typically supported year-round education.

And in spite of such predictions, the future of year-round school in the United States still depends primarily on the public's attitude toward this innovation. If the members of this society are willing to forego the two-part year and consequently alter the organization of their lives and the lives of their children, then year-round school may become the rule, not the exception. But such willingness may not be readily forthcoming. The school/vacation dichotomy is one of the long-lived, essentially unquestioned mores of our society. And well-entrenched habits do not change rapidly.

NOTES

1. Quoted by Velma Adams, "The Extended School Year . . ."
2. Unless otherwise noted, all references from Thomas in the text are in the following source: George I. Thomas, "The Legal and Financial Questions."
3. Unless otherwise noted, all references from Jensen in the text are in the following source: George M. Jensen, "Does Year-Round Education Make Sense?"
4. Unless otherwise noted, all references from McLain in the text are in the following source: John D. McLain, "Emerging Plans for Year Round Education."
5. Unless otherwise noted, all references from Bauman in the text are in the following source: W. Scott Bauman, "The School Calendar Dilemma . . ."
6. Quoted by Velma Adams, "The Extended School Year . . ."
7. Quoted in "Year-Round Schooling Can Benefit Business."
8. George I. Thomas, *A Capsule Picture . . .*
9. George I. Thomas, *A Capsule Picture . . .*
10. George I. Thomas, *A Capsule Picture . . .*
11. W. Scott Bauman, "Economic and Financial Implications of Year-Round Education."
12. Quoted by Velma Adams, "The Extended School Year . . ."
13. Quoted by Velma Adams, "The Extended School Year . . ."
14. Quoted by Velma Adams, "The Extended School Year . . ."
15. October 30, 1973.
16. Telephone interview with author, October 30, 1973.
17. Reported in *Education U.S.A.*, January 8, 1973.

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